

Message Text

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PAGE 01 OTTAWA 02314 041800Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, CA
SUBJECT: FEDERAL LEADERS' REACTION TO QUEBEC WHITE PAPER

1. PM TRUDEAU HAS YET TO COMMENT ON QUEBEC'S LANGUAGE
WHITE PAPER AND REACTION OF OTHER FEDERAL LEADERS AS RE-
PORTED BY MEDIA HAS RANGED FROM DEFENSE MIN DANSON'S MILD
STATEMENT ("I AM NOT DISTURBED BY IT, BUT TERRIBLY
INTERESTED") TO POSTMASTER GENERAL BLAIS'S COMMENT THAT
"WHITE PAPER TROUNCES CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEES OF MINOR-
ITY GROUPS."

2. NOT SURPRISINGLY, MOST INITIAL COMMENT CAME FROM
MINISTERS WELL-KNOWN FOR STRONG, PUBLIC OUTSPOKENNESS.
INDIAN AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS MIN WARREN ALLMAND, FOR EXAM-
PLE, ASSERTED ON DAY PAPER RELEASED THAT PROVISION THAT
COURT JUDGMENTS BE GIVEN ONLY IN FRENCH WAS CLEARLY UN-
CONSTITUTIONAL. HE ADDED REQUIREMENT THAT PUBLIC BODIES,
INCLUDING SCHOOL BOARDS, OPERATE IN FRENCH "IS STUPID."
FINALLY, RE "FRANCISATION" OF BUSINESS ACTIVITIES, HE
INDICATED IT "MAY FORCE HEAD OFFICES OUT OF QUEBEC.

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PAGE 02 OTTAWA 02314 041800Z

MAYBE THEY DON'T WANT HEAD OFFICES."

3. JEAN CHRETIEN, MIN INDUSTRY, TRADE AND COMMERCE,
STOPPED SLIGHTLY SHORT OF ALLMAND REACTION. ALTHOUGH HE
INDICATED THAT SOME PARTS OF PROPOSALS, LIKE RESTRICTIONS
ON USE OF ENGLISH IN COURTS AND LEGISLATURE, ARE CLEARLY
UNCONSTITUTIONAL, HE ADDED, "I DON'T THINK FEDERAL GOVERN-

MENT CAN DECIDE ON WHETHER TO INTERVENE UNTIL LEGISLATION IS PRESENTED. WE DON'T KNOW IF THE PROPOSALS IN WHITE PAPER WILL BE INCLUDED IN LAW."

4. PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE (PC) LEADER JOE CLARK TOOK A MORE CAUTIOUS APPROACH. CLARK NOTED THAT THRUST OF WHITE PAPER WOULD BE TO DISCOURAGE UNILINGUAL BUSINESSES FROM INVESTING IN QUEBEC. HE POINTED OUT THAT "IT WILL BE DIFFICULT FOR A CANADIAN COMPANY RUN BY SOMEONE SAY FROM CALGARY -- WHO IS UNILINGUAL -- TO MAINTAIN ACTIVITIES HERE (CLARK WAS SPEAKING IN QUEBEC)." HE DISMISSED SUGGESTION THAT THIS WOULD REPRESENT ANTI-FRENCH BACKLASH, ASSERTING THAT "IT'S NOT A QUESTION OF BEING ANTI-FRENCH. IT'S JUST A QUESTION OF RESPONDING TO AN OBSTACLE FACING INVESTORS."

5. LEADING CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY SENATOR EUGENE FORSEY NOTED HE WAS "APPALLED" BY THE WHITE PAPER AND SAW THIS AS THE FIRST ATTEMPT BY THE PARTI QUEBECOIS (PQ) GOVERNMENT TO DRIVE OUT ENGLISH-SPEAKING QUEBECERS BEFORE THE INDEPENDENCE REFERENDUM. HE SAID "IF YOU DISCOURAGE THEM ENOUGH SO THAT THEY MOVE OUT, THEN THEY CAN'T VOTE AGAINST YOU IN THE REFERENDUM."

6. FORMER NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY (NDP) LEADER DAVID LEWIS, WHO NOW NDP ELDER STATESMAN, CAUTIONED AGAINST ENGLISH OVER-REACTION. ENGLISH-SPEAKING CANADIANS, HE COMMENTED, MUST DECIDE WHETHER TO ALLOW THEMSELVES "TO BE DRAGGED INTO A CONFRONTATION ON AN OBSCURE CONSTITUTIONAL POINT."

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PAGE 03 OTTAWA 02314 041800Z

7. COMMENT: AS INDICATED ABOVE, INITIAL REACTION FROM PROMINENT FEDERAL FIGURES OVER WEEKEND FOLLOWING PAPER RELEASE WAS SPOTTY AND MUCH OF IT VISCERAL. OUR ASSUMPTION IS THAT, ALTHOUGH THE PROPOSALS WERE EXPECTED TO BE TOUGH, WHEN TABLED THEY CAME AS SOMETHING OF SHOCK TO OFFICIAL OTTAWA. IN ANY CASE, FEDERAL GOVERNMENT MAY NOT SIGNAL ANY OFFICIAL REACTION UNTIL IMPLEMENTING LEGISLATION FOLLOWS WHITE PAPER. ENDERS

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